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CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY IN FRANCE.

THE present state of French philosophy appears at first sight a little confused. One cannot point to a dominant school and dissenting schools, each having an undisputed leader and fairly submissive disciples. Without doubt some heads arise above the common level, and one distinguishes clearly here and there groups of thinkers, something like whirlpools of ideas, which become enlarged and diffused more or less, but all this shows little fixity of character or connection. The ends pursued are diverse, the tasks undertaken various, the methods different, and each of the workers who employs himself in this field, although inspired by some predecessor, and remembering the lessons of the past and profiting by the work of his colleagues, nevertheless tends to remain in a large measure master of his ideas and judge of their tendencies. The general aspect of French philosophy may be in a manner likened to that of a city which architects, masons, and artisans build without much previous understanding, each according to his taste and following his bent. They influence each other more or less, they obey more or less the necessities which result from the very nature of their work, just as they are influenced by race and education. But even so the uniformity desirable for strict classification is not attained. This independence on the part of the workers gives rise occasionally to some monuments vast and well ordered in themselves, but the *ensemble* of which they form a part lacks unity and coherence. Thus there spring up on all sides edifices of varying degrees of grandeur and comfort, but which show no anxiety for alignment on the part of the various builders. The total result is sufficiently interesting. The workers are active, and lack neither courage nor skill. There are ample proofs of power and originality in the work which we see going on everywhere around us. In order to say something of what is being done, we must, therefore, simply pass in review the different parts of the ideal plan imposed by the very nature of the subject matter and of philosophical problems.

I.

Let us commence with the philosophy which is most closely allied to the sciences. This is not neglected. There has been a great deal of speculation quite recently regarding mathematics. Mathematicians have become philosophers, and philosophers mathematicians, and the

most abstract of the sciences is very much in favor among young metaphysicians. MM. Couturat, Evellin, Milhaud, Tannery and several other thinkers have done useful work in this field, and a long time ago M. Renouvier drew important philosophical results from the contradiction inherent in the conception of an infinite number. He deduced from it the necessity of a first beginning, and of a limit to extension and duration. His views have frequently been criticised, and no solution of the question has as yet been accepted as final. The arguments of Zénon d'Elée have also been minutely examined, interpreted, debated, and defended.

Imaginary geometry also has often been presented to philosophers; but the physico-chemical sciences are more neglected. Apart from some articles on the philosophy of chemistry, there are few but special students who concern themselves with this subject, or rather there are a few philosophers who, passing in review every order of phenomena, are interested in physics and chemistry without making a special study of them. It is true that special works, such as those of Berthelot and Wurtz, go beyond science. In biology, the philosophical controversies about transformation, so frequent twenty or thirty years ago, have somewhat subsided. The form and causes of evolution rather than its reality, are discussed. The hypotheses of Weismann, for example, have given rise to interesting discussions. Other general theories also have been defended or criticised. M. Ch. Richet has insisted very strongly on the importance of finality in biology. The idea of life itself has been submitted to a serious examination. M. Le Dantec, in some recent and noteworthy works, has tried to compare vital phenomena with chemical phenomena by showing the special form which characterizes the former. He has vigorously maintained determinism in physiological phenomena, and in the facts of consciousness; criticised the notion of individuality, and looked for a new interpretation of heredity. His writings can be recommended for their precision of ideas, the strict logical connection which is always aimed at and frequently attained, and for a praiseworthy desire to understand thoroughly the general aspects of the phenomena under consideration. It is true that occasionally these works show the faults which result from analysis when it is not sufficiently supplemented by synthesis. I wish also in passing at least to mention an excellent book by M. Sabatier on life and death, in which the author investigates the causes of death, setting out from the work of Weismann and Delbœuf. He studies in this work, with great clearness and much ingenuity, the 'power of attraction' of the living matter and its diminution when this matter is differentiated into living beings.

But that which is of most interest to philosophy, as the general view of the world, in the contemporary scientific movement, is the position which psychology and sociology have taken as independent sciences. France has contributed largely to this result, and the French works inspired by the new sciences are often of great value.

The separation of psychology from general philosophy took place some twenty years ago. The way was prepared by Condillac, Cabanis, and the Ideologists, and by the development of the physiology of the nervous system, as well as by the work of the alienists ; but it was retarded by the philosophical *rôle* imposed upon psychology by Victor Cousin, whose influence on public education was considerable. It was, however, certainly hastened and rendered more easy among us by the development of the associational and evolutionary psychology in England (Mill, Bain, Spencer), and of experimental psychology in Germany (Fechner, Wundt, etc.). Taine, who had for a long time combatted classic spiritualism, founded in a measure the new psychology in France by his book, *De l'intelligence* (1870). Shortly afterwards, Ribot made known the works of the English and German psychologists, and in prefaces which attracted a great deal of notice, he insisted on the necessity of the young science separating itself from general philosophy, as the older sciences had done, in order to live its own life ; he also investigated the principal characteristics of this science and traced the programme which it had to follow. The different works which he has since published, and which have been highly successful, have shown that he wished to rid psychology of dry minutiae, which are scientific and precise only in appearance, as well as of empty and vague generalizations. The separation which he desired was strongly accentuated by others, so that the reaction against metaphysics was frequently exaggerated and erroneous, and anxiety for precision has too often inspired psychologists with contempt for the philosophical point of view and for general conceptions.

I have not here to speak of psychology in so far as it is a special science. I shall not therefore deal with that which is of importance in the scientific work of M. Ribot, of M. Pierre Janet, or of M. Binet. But, whatever happens, psychology cannot lose its interest in philosophy, and philosophy cannot forget it any more than the other sciences, and perhaps still less. Moreover, the separation has never been complete. I do not see what a science would gain by never reflecting on its principles and methods, by never having its principal results compared with those of the neighboring sciences, by never trying to discover the general significance of the phenomena which it studies, but I believe that it would

lose thereby and humanity with it. But philosophers have not left off being psychologists, and a great many psychologists have philosophized at times in spite of themselves. Even from the books of M. Ribot, whose attitude has lately become more reserved and judicious, and who has to some extent abandoned certain general ideas which formerly influenced him, one could very well infer his philosophical point of view. M. Rauh warned psychologists against the dangers of philosophy, and at the same time actively combatted the narrow and illogical ideas of some psychologists. He has rightly recommended the fullest use of all the means of knowledge; he has advised that we should interest ourselves in the verification of facts rather than in their interpretation; he has gone so far as to say that one must know how to form and maintain, at least provisionally, contradictory hypotheses, that unity is not the end of science, that logic is not its rule, but rather good sense, which is not always logic. Notwithstanding all this, he himself has not always escaped the dangers which he pointed out.

Others have taken a different position: they have tried to be philosophers as well as psychologists, or at least they have completed the scientific part of their psychology by some philosophical hypotheses. The works of M. Bergson, a subtle and original thinker, but whose conclusions are debatable, have attracted a great deal of notice. He asserts in one thesis, whose influence has been marked, that one cannot legitimately speak of the intensity of states of consciousness, nor make of them distinct phenomena with definite boundaries. From this proposition he derived interesting results regarding determinism and free will, whereby he set at rest the ancient antagonism by almost suppressing the two adversaries. In a more recent book, he has set forth a very ingenious and elaborate metaphysical theory in which he arrives at conclusions regarding the nature of the external world which approach very nearly those of common sense. M. Fouillée has given in an important work the psychology of *idées-forces*, and applied the general ideas which I shall presently have occasion to set forth briefly. I myself have also attempted to develop a group of general ideas in a series of psychological works. The essential fact of mental life appears to me to be systematic association, a sort of law of finality, implying other less general laws which are another aspect or consequence of the former. I have tried to show how systematic association, much better than contiguous association or association by resemblance, can serve to make intelligible the life of the spirit, and how it can furnish the basis of a logical classification of character and intellects.

I have also pointed out how this great law of the mind is allied to the general laws of the world.

Æsthetics must be connected with psychology. Certainly it would be more logical to connect it with general philosophy, but it has recently been especially studied in France from the psychological point of view. M. Sourian has treated the question of suggestion in art with a great deal of ingenuity and originality, and he believes he has found in suggestion the type, the universal form of æsthetic action.

Sociology, as was to be presumed, has been detached from the common trunk later than psychology, but it has followed it closely. Besides, it had not been as closely connected with general philosophy as psychology. Political economy, a kind of sociological fragment isolated somewhat arbitrarily, for some time enjoyed an almost independent existence. Sociology, as named and outlined by Auguste Comte, springs from an interest in the verifications and reflections made by philosophers on the customs of man, the transformations of societies, the causes of their progress and their decline, and on the principal facts of history ; it also springs from the development of political economy, and the problems which are connected with it. More recently, a great thinker like Furtel de Coulange wished to make history include sociology, a conception which enlarges history too much, and too much restricts social science. The condition of politics, the struggle of parties and classes, the sufferings and disorders of mankind, have for a long time suggested utopias, or inspired more exact inquiry. The observations of travellers, and the curiosity which their accounts have provoked, the remarkable difference in the customs and institutions of different peoples, are yet another source of sociology. The sociology of M. Letourneau, for example, is founded on ethnography, and the author has followed the great monographs—which deal with the different forms which the same institution has assumed in the history of the race—on the evolution of marriage, property, etc.

The books of M. Fouillée are above all those of a philosopher who loves to discover everywhere his general ideas. Conformably to his method, he has wished to reconcile in sociology naturalism with idealism, the theory which makes society an organism, with that of the social contract. M. G. de Lapouge has made anthropology predominate in his sociological conceptions. The dolichocephalous and the brachycephalous marks, light or dark hair, the figure, etc., these are the characteristics upon which he establishes the distinction of races and the important factors of social phenomena. He has expressed his views in a

very interesting, bold, and pessimistic book, the conclusions of which are, however, open to question. M. Le Bon, on the contrary, has conceived a purely historical view of the race, but he also admits that the race thus understood has a very great importance ; he has set forth and applied his ideas in numerous, much valued works. M. Lacombe, on the other hand, has vigorously opposed these views. The important study of M. Espinas on animal societies is that of a thinker exact and trustworthy, a convinced evolutionist, and a great friend of science and its methods. M. Tarde has also freed himself from philosophical ideas, and his position as magistrate must have helped to interest him in his studies of criminology at the time when the Italian school was temporarily in vogue among us. Foreign influences are indeed at work among us, either in diffusing certain general ideas, or in giving vogue to certain questions. The idea of evolution, the theory of Spencer, has certainly influenced our French thinkers very much ; the theory of the social organism was a long time in favor, before being as it is to-day abandoned ; the numerous studies on criminology have been to a large extent called out by the works of Lombroso, Ferri, and Garofalo, which, however, were preceded in France by a work by Despine which was little known. Finally our socialism, which is derived partly from French traditions and attaches itself to Fourier, depends somewhat also on the *Capital* of Karl Marx, who was very much admired, and still has disciples in socialistic Germany, although Benoit Malon and several other French socialists have given up the opinion which attributes all the progress of humanity to the phenomena of economics, and have adopted broader but sometimes vague conceptions.

By degrees, despite conflicts and often useless complications, there has emerged a considerable uniformity of studies which resulted in forming the basis of the new science, which is still very young, but singularly active and progressive. Chairs of sociology established in the universities, private endowments like the Social Museum, and the free College of Social Sciences, even the free School of Political Science, whose aim is somewhat restricted, the appearance of several reviews, new collections of works in large libraries, all sufficiently attest the great interest which has been aroused. Psychology, which was so much in fashion fifteen years ago, appears to some extent supplanted by the pre-occupation of the general public with its younger rival. One often sees the favor of the cultivated multitude thus go to the sciences which are being formed, or, which have recently yielded results which seem to bear on the great philosophical problems, while the well-organized

sciences, which simply follow their regular evolution, are somewhat neglected.

It does not enter into the plan of this study to examine the results obtained in sociology, or even to indicate them. I only wish to emphasize in the development of the science of society the points which are of general philosophic interest.

M. Tarde, whose works have rapidly acquired a very great and merited reputation at home and abroad, does not see in sociology, of which he is one of the principal representatives, an absolutely autonomous science. He would readily subordinate it to psychology, or, to speak more exactly, he would make of it a special branch of psychology, since he believes that the factors of the social phenomena are first of all the ideas and the sentiments of men. He believes that here more than elsewhere the elements of the facts are known to us, and that this knowledge, rare enough in science, places us in an exceptionally favorable position to understand social phenomena. Belief and desire are the forces by means of which M. Tarde seeks to explain economic and political phenomena, while imitation in all its forms remains the great social fact, the very framework of 'sociality.' The presence of beliefs and desires, which spring up everywhere, combat and replace each other, but are yet continually diffused, remains the essential point of social science. M. Tarde is thus led to see in sociology only a sort of applied and more complex psychology.

Conversely, M. de Roberty and M. Izoulet make psychology a kind of dependency of sociology. The former maintained twenty years ago that it is the social state which produces the individual consciousness, that sociology logically precedes concrete social science; the latter, in a doctor's thesis which made a great stir some years ago, developed an analogous conception and maintained that the mind is a creation of society, that one must look for the explanation of mind neither in metaphysics nor in biology, but rather in social phenomena. Here we have the relation of the psychical and social phenomena completely reversed. Already Comte, if I mistake not, had brought one part of the science of mind into connection with sociology, and Littré had pointed out the necessity of a distinction between mental faculties and their products, the former depending upon biology, and the latter belonging to concrete psychology which falls within the field of sociology. Psychology, properly so-called, would thus disappear between the two neighboring sciences.

Finally, M. Durkheim has completed the isolation of sociology. It has been his purpose to mark out more clearly the boundaries of the

new science, to separate it as far as possible from the other sciences, and to render it autonomous and independent. He has outlined the rules of sociological method, and has studied profoundly both the general characteristics and some special points of the science. Moreover, he has conceived social phenomena as a special synthesis *sui generis*, involving, no doubt, psychological elements, but not depending much more obviously upon these elements than do the physical qualities of water upon those of oxygen and hydrogen. He is strongly opposed to every intrusion of psychology into sociology, to every explanation of social facts by means of psychical facts (ideas, desires), and on this point his doctrine is very distinctly opposed to that of M. Tarde.

These, then, are three very different views of sociology. It seems to me that each one rests on real facts, and that consequently they are all three true, each one in certain cases, and relatively to certain facts. It would be important to examine what events and facts are best explained by each of them, and to observe the general considerations which follow as a consequence. In addition to the advantages which sociology would derive from the recognition of these various truths, which could not be contradictory, our philosophical conceptions and our general scientific ideas would thereby gain greatly. A thorough study of this question would help towards the solution of two important problems: first, that of the interrelation of the sciences; and, secondly that of the relation of a compound to its elements and the nature of the synthesis. These problems must otherwise prove difficult of solution. Hitherto, indeed, the intercourse between the different sciences, although useful and frequent, as is illustrated by mathematical physics and biological chemistry, lacks order and system. Comte, as is well known, never approved of explaining the phenomena of an abstract science by the laws of an inferior science, *i. e.*, of one which preceded it in his hierarchy. An illustration of this would be the employment of chemistry to explain biological phenomena. It is in this procedure that he very properly sees the vice of materialism. Since his time the converse proceeding, the explanation of phenomena of a certain order by means of phenomena of a higher order, as for example chemical phenomena by sociology, has been pointed out as the vice of spiritualism. Doubtless it would be just to recognize that both modes of procedure are, under certain conditions, legitimate and useful. It is possible that certain very general laws, equally applicable to different orders of phenomena, are only perceived at first in one of these orders. The comparison of the different sciences, and the transference of the conceptions of one science, with the

proper modifications, to the domain of another, must therefore have good results. It seems well, for example, that the idea of determinism has climbed the ladder of the sciences, proceeding from the simplest phenomena to the more complex. By way of compensation, the idea of finality has descended by a reverse process, although it is still used in a very obscure and indefinite way in the physical sciences, where it is distorted by the influences of the more concrete sciences. Without doubt a great many attempts have been made to explain the higher by the lower, the mind by the organism, the organism by chemical forces. And this procedure, when one understands it well—which is rarely the case—is legitimate and profitable. But the converse method, rarely enough employed, is no more useless, and may at least serve to suggest useful conceptions. It is evident that the differences must be clearly distinguished, and if the same words are retained in each case, we must attribute to them such a general signification, that they may be applied at once to all the groups of phenomena to which one attaches them, or which are designated by them. I see here several problems for sociology. Huxley formerly pointed out some analogies between social and chemical phenomena, but without insisting on them very strongly. In return, the theory of the social organism, which was a long time in favor, has certainly spread abroad some true ideas, involved unfortunately in a great mass of illusions. It has too closely united diverse phenomena in an insufficiently abstract conception. But those who have pointed out that the organism is a society have certainly helped to render intelligible the interrelations of biological phenomena, and the application of an analogous idea to psychology appears likely to be fruitful.

Moreover, it is by a strange illusion that we speak almost exclusively of the conditioning of the phenomena of a more concrete science by those of the sciences which are at the beginning of the series. It is indeed certain that without mathematical truths there would be no physical truths, that without chemical phenomena the facts of biology would not exist. It is not less true, however, that without physical phenomena there would not be any mathematical truths, and that the most certain truths of the chemico-physical world seem only to be rendered possible by life. Similarly, as M. de Roberty and M. Izoulet maintain, it is society which has created minds. This again is a case exactly analogous to the preceding one. And psychology finds a place somewhere between biology and sociology, just as organic chemistry falls between biology and inorganic chemistry; but, as it seems to me, with a distinct character of its own much more strongly accentuated. Here then we have

a number of important problems which are still greatly in need of elucidation.

The question of the relation of a compound to its elements is not better understood, and psychology and sociology both from their theoretical and philosophical standpoints, might furnish material aid in studying it. In fact, this relation seems to vary greatly in different cases. The example of oxygen and hydrogen uniting to form water, whose properties are very different from those of its elements without our being able to know why they differ from it, and how they are derived from it, is an extreme case distinct enough to be often cited. In other cases, on the contrary, there seems to be no problem at all. A house, for example, scarcely affords us any problem; what we know of stone, mortar, iron, wood, brick, etc., enables us to understand clearly the result attained when they are combined. Synthesis ranges from mixture to combination (in a sense approaching that of chemistry), but its degrees are innumerable, and its principles obscure. Well, then, it seems to me that social phenomena present to us very clear examples of the different forms of synthesis. There are certain cases where the nature of the individual renders the actions of the collectivity perfectly intelligible. What we know of the ideas and characters of members of a family makes it quite comprehensible why the family taken as a whole has acted in this or that manner. Here the views of M. Tarde on belief, desire, and imitation (respect for tradition, influence of a member of the family having special authority, etc.), would certainly be applicable. In other cases, it is, on the contrary, the social group which appears to determine the mentality of the individuals who compose it, and which helps us to understand this mentality. When one enters an organized body—the army, for example, or the magistracy,—it is extremely difficult not to have the mind directed—formed or deformed in a very real sense—by a host of traditions, of acquired ideas, of habits of all sorts, of necessities resulting from the nature of the profession and its inevitable conditions. These conditions remain almost immutable, or evolve according to a sort of internal necessity, but they dominate and mould successively the individual minds of different generations. They form a kind of stamp which leaves a permanent imprint upon the individuals whom it models. Thus the psychology of the individual, though by no means useless, does not explain everything. We must admit, at least up to a certain point, the prior influence of sociological phenomena, of sociological forms, upon the ideas and sentiments, upon the beliefs and desires of the individual. We have here a concrete illustration of the ideas of M. de Roberty

and M. Izoulet, as well as of M. Durkheim. However, the theories of the last thinker are better illustrated by cases where we see more clearly the relation of social habits, of diverse influences which have been slowly organized with the manner of acting and reacting of a whole people considered in its entirety, or of certain social elements. Doubtless one can say that the social mind which is formed and comes to dominate individuals, is itself the product of individual consciousness. But the ultimate question would be to know how and why individual minds are affected by other individual minds in different ways, according to the change of customs, so as to produce, in certain circumstances (which it would be necessary to determine exactly), a collective mind which does not reproduce the ideas and desires of individual minds, but a new mode of thinking and feeling. The studies of 'the psychology of the crowd' by M. Le Bon and by M. Tarde, furnish many interesting facts which will aid in answering this question. Moreover, since the whole and its elements are more easily observable in society than anywhere else, we may hope to arrive at some very important results, and to reach a very general conception, which is at the same time sufficiently differentiated, of the relation of a compound to its components—that is to say, of one of the most important facts for general philosophy and a theory of the world.

Psychology and sociology are, then, still in that period of development where the sciences have not completely broken with general philosophy. It is very generally supposed that this condition is injurious to science, that it must try to escape from it. I believe, on the contrary, that this condition must be permanent; moreover, it returns spontaneously on the sciences as soon as some bold hypothesis or unforeseen theory deranges their organization, and breaks through their narrow limits. Under these circumstances, both in assuming and maintaining the fixed character which makes of them real sciences, the different parts of our knowledge preserve a freshness of life, a flexibility which permits of better organization, and at the same time allows them to contribute more readily to the great philosophical conceptions, as well as to receive from the latter a general point of view, and also a broader and more human significance. These facts then are no longer of interest to humanity only with reference to their special objects and the needs which they tend to satisfy, but also become significant for the general aspirations of man which they develop and satisfy for a time. Now and then we observe that when a science is unsettled by the work of a man of genius, it becomes the object of general attention, and returns, so to speak, to philosophy. This result has been

brought about in the natural sciences by the work of Darwin. I think, too, that we should never lose sight of the indispensable relations which exist between philosophy and the sciences ; for, if this is done, these relations will one day have to be renewed. At present, French philosophers appear to be filled with good will towards science. From the side of the scientists (*les savants*) the intentions seem to be more doubtful. In sociology, the distinction is not made ; most sociologists are philosophers, and those who are not are still glad to find among philosophers their masters, allies, or disciples. But in psychology the hostility is already actively enough manifested on every side. Moreover, the scientists do not appear to be much interested in philosophical questions, and so they sometimes treat these questions with an audacity which is rather naïve. A writer who is well known both as a philosopher and a man of science, recently wrote me regarding an excellent book which he had just published on scientific philosophy : “ How tiresome it is not to find a single man among specialists who would have the patience to read to the end of the first page, and to find that every one straightway rejects your book with the supreme contempt that he has vowed to all that is metaphysical, a word, moreover, of which he is far from knowing the exact signification. All my philosopher friends have warmly congratulated me on my new work, but not one of my scientific friends has had the courage to tell me his opinion of it. They commiserate me upon it secretly, that is certain.” There was a time when philosophers held the sciences too much in disdain, but they have learned to understand and appreciate the scientific spirit and its results. May specialists, even those whom the novelty of their science elates somewhat, show themselves less narrow than formerly towards the philosophical spirit, and the problems of philosophy. Everybody would gain thereby.

II.

Let us pass from the philosophy of the special sciences to the general philosophy of the sciences. The latter has not been neglected in France. Nevertheless, attempts to reach a universal synthesis are not at all common. Our philosophers, while informing themselves regarding the results of science, show a tendency to place especial reliance upon some order of facts which interests them particularly, or to attempt to confirm, by scientific facts, systems suggested either by the criticism of theories already known, or by the analysis of some general phenomena. These different modes of procedure, too, are closely con-

nected. Sometimes, again, an author states and develops his philosophical ideas only in the course of more special work.

M. Lalande has just published a very valuable book on dissolution as opposed to evolution in the physical and moral sciences. Reversing the position of Spencer, M. Lalande discovers in the world an advance from the differentiated to the undifferentiated, from the unlike to the like. He passes in review—giving proof of very extensive knowledge—physical, physiological, psychical, and social phenomena. In spite of some notable exceptions, especially in the physiological world, he finds that it is dissolution which is of importance. In the physical world, the diminution of force, the conversion, more or less retarded, but inevitable, of all physical forces into heat, the uniform distribution, also inevitable, of this heat over all the matter in the universe, indicate clearly the significance of the march of events. In biology, the individual shows a kind of exception to the general law, but the differentiation which is here manifest destroys itself; *i. e.*, when the differentiation increases death results. Independent thought, that which has not merely for its object the satisfaction of physical needs, works against individuality. Science, æsthetics, ethics, are perpetually creating and augmenting similarities among men, and weakening the differences which characterize them. Finally, after examining the life of societies, and studying successively the social assimilation of the sexes, the dissolution of family and ethnical groups, M. Lalande finds in this field also the general and progressive diminution of differences. Thus the universe proceeds from differentiation to undifferentiation, and this movement, which is for M. Lalande the only possible one, is also the only ethical one. The principle of evolution cannot lead us very far; if we claim to follow it, the path is quickly closed before us. The principle of dissolution, on the other hand, opens to us a field which, in practice at least, is infinite, where each step in advance renders the following one more easy; and our duty, then, is to favor dissolution, to oppose individuality, to prefer always the universal to the particular, and, without doubt, to work for the suppression of life as the ultimate though distant ideal, and thus to bring about the absolute uniformity of the universe.

Passing now to a very different field, I may mention an excellent book on scientific logic, *Les aperçus des taxinomie générale*, by M. Durand de Gros. The author, who was already known by his excellent works on scientific philosophy, has this time investigated the general theory of classification. Classifications of every kind, those operations undertaken for the purpose of establishing “une distribution

idéale des choses par laquelle la pensée se peint à elle-même et résume en un merveilleux raccourci l'ensemble et la diversité infinie de leurs rapports," are traced by the author to four great general types, to four great taxonomical orders. The first is the order of generality or of resemblance. The mind here substitutes for the operations of objects their constitutive marks, and it makes a scale of these marks according to their degree of generality and their extension to a greater or less number of objects to be classified, by starting from the individual characteristics of these objects and then passing on to more general standpoints. The classifications of botany and zoölogy are more or less happy illustrations of this principle. The second order is that of composition or collectivity, founded upon the relations of the whole to the part, and of the part to the whole. It proceeds from the element to the compound, and contains, not abstractions, but concrete objects. The division of a country into provinces, and of provinces into districts, may illustrate its nature; our system of numeration is an almost perfect instance of it. The third order consists of an hierarchy founded on the relations of subordination; the solar system and an army may serve to illustrate it. Finally the fourth order, the order of genealogy or evolution, classifies objects according to their parental or other analogous relations. Genealogical classifications employed in historical genealogical tables are also introduced into natural history and linguistics. The theories of M. Durand de Gros are developed at great length and with much richness of detail. In some respects his book may be said to form an important contribution, and to mark a great advance in the constitution of a new and important theory. The work has been very favorably received, and will still further add to the author's reputation, which, although already considerable, was certainly not as great as he deserved.

Will it appear singular to speak of occult sciences *à propos* of scientific philosophy? However that may be, since spiritualists and occultists generally claim to found their conclusions on facts, since some of these facts—of which the interpretation is very doubtful—appear to be introduced into science or to be on the point of it, and as an attempt has been made to found a conception of the world on such facts, I must remind my readers that for some time there has been a great deal of interest in France in investigations concerning the mysterious powers of the human mind. The scientific spirit which occasionally inspires these researches gives to them a real value. After the facts of hypnosis had been placed beyond a doubt, the phenomena of telepathy or

influence at a distance were made the subject of study. The works of M. Charles Richet and of M. Pierre Janet have shown what can result from purely scientific study, and their conclusions are amply sufficient to lead the mind from incredulity to doubt. These studies are closely related to psychology taken as a special science, and from this side I do not have to occupy myself with them here ; but they have a further significance since they attach themselves very closely to the experimental researches which have for their aim the establishment of the existence of the soul independently of the organism, its direct influence upon matter, and its survival. Some careful experiments appear to indicate a possibility of an action upon matter, although this is still imperfectly understood. Beyond that we have nothing very certain to rest upon. Spiritualism and 'immortalism' have men of talent and honesty among their adherents, but from the scientific point of view nothing definite or assured seems yet to be known. The problem of the future life has, moreover, been attacked from another side. Although denied by some philosophers, the doctrine of a future life has found some defenders. M. Sabatier, whose work on life and death I have already cited, has tried to prove that our scientific knowledge contains nothing contradictory to the possibility of a future life. M. l'Abbé Piat, in a very recent book, in order to demonstrate the reality of another life, has emphasized the law of finality, which is clearly manifested in living nature, whatever may be the interpretation given to it. He also dwells upon the adaptation of living beings and of their functions to nature, and to the part which they have to play. The facts which M. Piat points out admit of a different interpretation from the one which he has given, and finality in nature has not the perfection which his theory would exact. The attempt of M. Piat ought nevertheless to be mentioned if it were only for the fact that he has abandoned old metaphysical arguments and denies their worth. This is an important indication.

III.

The problem of the nature of philosophy does not appear to be the subject of much enquiry at the present time. The philosophy of philosophy, if one may so speak, is a little neglected. Each thinker deals with philosophy in his own way, but does not spend much time in discussing the justification and abstract nature of general philosophy. Some interesting works have been published on this subject, but they are relatively few. Religion, the other form of the general conception of the world, is perhaps more studied. It has given rise to a remarkable book by M. Sabatier *L'esquisse d'une philosophie de la*

religion, in which the author is inspired by a comprehensive symbolism. A number of other important books on this subject have also appeared. I only mention here *L'irréligion de l'avenir* by Guyau which was published thirteen years ago and of which I shall speak *à propos* of the work of that lamented philosopher.

Let us come to that which may be considered the most essential part of philosophy, to the great systems and to the general theories concerning the world. The great divisions of former generations are transformed, but they still continue, and the old classifications may still serve us if we change the sense a little. Let us mention, then, three great groups: the spiritualistic and idealistic, the materialistic and positivistic, and, finally, a group of thinkers who endeavor more or less consciously to mediate between the other two, and who are to some extent recognized by each of the former opposing schools.

It is necessary, no doubt, to connect the Catholic thinkers with the first class. Nevertheless, they form a separate group, comparatively numerous and zealous. They have freed themselves from spiritualistic metaphysics, and going back beyond Descartes, whom perhaps they do not admire very much, they occupy themselves chiefly with the Scholastics and St. Thomas, in accordance with the instructions of Leo XIII. They try to combine love of metaphysics with a great respect for experience, adopting readily scientific methods, and, for example, quoting the representatives of the new psychology with some favor. There exists among them an earnest intellectual life which is in itself relatively free. I have just mentioned a book by M. l'Abbé Piat; the same author has published several other works of real interest, and these may be taken as representing well this group of thinkers.

The spiritualism of Victor Cousin, little in favor for many years past, has no longer any representatives in France; nevertheless, M. Paul Janet, the most important and most justly esteemed of the group of thinkers who may be regarded as continuing to keep alive this doctrine, has quite recently published two volumes on the principles of metaphysics and psychology, in which he sets forth his philosophy. He has preserved the spiritualistic tendency in setting out from the facts of human consciousness, and in affirming the existence of the soul, the freedom of the will, the reality of the external world, the simple and unanalyzable idea of obligation, and the existence of God himself. One may of course refuse to accept the author's doctrine, but one cannot fail to recognize the ingenuity, the exactness, the breadth of mind, which he has shown in all his works.

Notwithstanding the talent of some of its defenders—most of whom

are now either dead or no longer active—classic spiritualism, the doctrine which Taine so rudely attacked in its beginnings, is now a thing of the past. A more abstract, difficult, and profound idealism, a doctrine which sometimes appears to be more rigorous and often more poetical than the older view, has succeeded in the favor of the new generation of metaphysicians. On the one hand, we have the school of M. Ravaisson and M. Lachelier, and, on the other, that of M. Renouvier and of Neo-criticism.

The first school looks at the problems of philosophy from an entirely different point of view from that of classic spiritualism. It readily employs abstract ideas, avoids anthropomorphism more completely, and does not depend so much upon common sense. M. Ravaisson, in a celebrated report on the state of philosophy in France, written in 1867, expressed his preference for the doctrine that “teaches that matter is only the lowest stage, and, so to speak, the shadow of existence; that all real existence is spiritual, and that everything else is only an imperfect outline of it; that, in reality, to be is to live, and to live is to think and will; that in the last analysis nothing is effected except through volition; that goodness and beauty alone explain the universe and its author; that the infinite and the absolute, whose nature is known to us only through its manifestations, consists in spiritual liberty; that liberty is thus the final explanation of things; that disorders and antagonisms disturb only the phenomenal surface, and that at bottom in the region of essential and eternal truth, all is grace, love, and harmony.”

And some years later M. Lachelier brought to a close a famous thesis on the principle of induction which he dedicated to M. Ravaisson, with these words: “Thus the realm of final causes without interfering with that of efficient causes, substitutes everywhere force for inertia, life for death, and liberty for fatality. Materialistic idealism, where we now pause for an instant only, represents a portion or rather the surface of things. The true philosophy of nature is, on the contrary, a spiritualistic realism from the standpoint of which every being is a force, and every force a thought which tends to a more and more complete consciousness of itself. This second philosophy, like the first, is entirely independent of religion; but in subordinating mechanism to finality, it prepares us to subordinate finality itself to a higher principle, and to overstep by an act of moral faith the limits of thought as well as those of nature.” I have quoted these two passages because they are fairly representative of the spirit which in recent years has inspired a large number of metaphysical works. I do not mean by

this that the theories are always identical; but the procedure, and also the general type of thought and method, are clearly enough indicated by these two quotations.

M. Boutroux, who has written a thesis on the contingency of the laws of nature, M. Séailles, who *à propos* of genius in art sets forth a doctrine similar to that of M. Ravaisson, and many other young philosophers, who have recently passed examinations for fellowships and doctor's degrees, all adopt at least the same general type of philosophy, although their views are not always identical. Their work is often characterized by logical rigor, by the abstract character and profundity of their thought, and at the same time by æsthetical emotion. For a long time the metaphysical theses presented at the Sorbonne have had at once the character of an abstract work, and a work of art. There has arisen a group of subtle, ingenious thinkers, who are skilful in dealing with abstract ideas, and who despise commonplace and trite philosophical expressions, as well as oratorical discourses, but many of whom belong rather to the virtuoso than to the scholarly type. Their work rather affords pleasure by its perfection of form, than contributes fruitful ideas regarding the nature of things. The work of some others is less purely æsthetic and more profitable. *La revue de métaphysique et de la morale*, founded some years ago, may be considered as representing the various tendencies which I have described.

Among the most remarkable metaphysicians of recent years, I shall mention M. Bergson, who in two recent works, *Les données immédiates de la conscience*, and *Matière et mémoire*, has ingeniously set forth some general views regarding the nature of the mind, and has defended a new view of spiritualism, which although debatable is original and subtle.

The Neo-criticism of M. Renouvier was very much in favor twenty years ago. I am not sure that its influence is still as great, but the doctrine will leave its mark. In a series of works rather crabbed and difficult, but which show great originality of mind, rare penetration, and quite remarkable powers of analysis and abstraction, M. Renouvier maintained a number of theories, partly borrowed from Kant and partly original. He opposed vigorously on the one hand metaphysical existences (entities, substances, the absolute and the infinite), and on the other he criticized with equal vigor positivism and evolutionism, and all attempts at unification of phenomena, or at reconciliation or general identification of philosophical doctrines, maintaining at the same time the irreducibility and authority of the moral law. His great enemy is pantheism in all its forms and with all its

consequences ; his own doctrine is a rational phenomenalism. He was for a long time editor of *La critique philosophique*, at first a weekly, then a monthly journal, which is now replaced by *L'année philosophique*. In this journal, he publishes each year an important study, as does also his former collaborator M. Pillon, a clear and straightforward thinker. In university circles, Neo-criticism has met with much sympathy, and M. Dauriac is also one of its adherents. Perhaps to-day M. Renouvier is even more respected and admired than followed, but his influence is still very evident, and manifests itself in many discussions and books even when their authors are not genuine disciples.

The different doctrines which I have rapidly passed in review have one characteristic in common. They are usually founded on the analysis of very general facts, or of processes and faculties of the mind which, perhaps, often comes to the same thing. They imply certainly neither the absence of, nor contempt for, accurate and varied scientific knowledge ; but they necessarily transcend scientific knowledge, and seek rather for the general abstract character of the mind and the world than for a synthesis which would unite the various phenomena and coördinate the results of experience. Opposed to these spiritualistic or idealistic theories, we find naturalism in its diverse forms. The present is not a period of active strife such as existed some years ago. These contests, however, will without doubt reappear under another form.

About twenty years ago there was more polemic than there is at present. In this epoch even materialism attempted a revival, and some interesting works on different subjects extol this doctrine. M. André Lefèvre, M. Letourneau, and some other writers, formed a kind of school. In the same epoch M. Jules Soury also declared, with some sceptical reservations, that materialism was, in his opinion, the most acceptable theory of the world. The general defect of the school was that they forgot to analyze and criticize, and also that they had nothing very particular to say regarding the conception of the world, nothing that the positivists and evolutionists could not have said as well. In certain respects the materialists, in their debate with the positivists of the school of Littré, were right, but the distinctions which they imagined to exist were not as important as they believed. But just because the materialistic doctrine was not sufficiently differentiated from the others, it had relatively little reason for a separate existence. Thus those members of the materialistic group who have continued to write—and several have talent—are generally de-

voted to special disciplines, M. Letourneau, for example, to ethnographical sociology, M. Yves Guyot to political economy, others to the fine arts or to different sciences. They show in their work a very pronounced spirit of anticlericalism, which is not always exempt from narrowness, but of which I should not like to speak ill at present, because it is indispensable in the struggle against the spirit of the past. They also show a general tendency to demand from the positive sciences the solution of philosophical problems, and from the subordinate sciences the reply to questions put by the superior sciences. This has at times produced a philosophy more scientific in appearance than in reality.

Positivism, brought into existence in France by the genius of Auguste Comte, had a very singular fortune. At first Comte was a little eclipsed by Littré, who carefully pruned, popularized, arranged, and, unfortunately, weakened positivism. The new doctrine thus popularized made a good figure in the world, and influenced a great many thinkers who treated the work of Littré as the latter had that of Comte, thus reducing one of the most curious, most complex, and most original systems of philosophy to some rudimentary principles showing the triumph of science over metaphysics and theology. After his death, however, Littré was quickly forgotten, and Comte reappeared beyond him, like a tall mountain behind a hill when both are in the distance. Perhaps his doctrine was not regarded as any more acceptable in its entirety, but his extraordinary largeness of conception—somewhat disquieting at times—and the synthetic power were more admired. Finally, the positivist religion continues to live, and its real head, M. Lafitte, whom certain persons think not very orthodox, is a thinker of real worth. He has been called to a chair in the Collège de France, he directs a journal, the *Revue occidentale* which takes the place of *La philosophie positive* edited by Littré and Wyronhoff, he has written on fundamental questions of philosophy in such a way as to increase his reputation as a thinker, but it cannot be said that he is the leader of an active school in this country.

Beside the ancient forms of positivism, there has arisen a new one which has been characterized already by the name ‘hyperpositivism.’ I have classed M. Roberty, a former collaborator of the review of Littré, and whom I have already quoted, with the French school; for, although of Russian origin, he has worked with us, written in our language, and his position is very closely allied to that of Auguste Comte. He has already published a somewhat lengthy series of interesting books which show depth and originality, and in which clearness of exposition is not

the greatest merit, although his conclusions are often debatable. He has maintained the historical and logical subordination of philosophy to science, philosophical monism, the reduction of ethics to sociology, and has also vigorously attacked contemporary agnosticism.

Evolutionism, which came to us from England, formerly aroused the enthusiasm of the philosophical public. A period of calm has now ensued. I do not think that any French philosopher is really, to-day, a disciple of Spencer. The theory of the unknowable has found among us more critics than defenders, and the formula of evolution as given by the English philosopher has not a great many partisans who accept it without modification; but that which has been preserved, that which we owe to evolutionistic philosophy, is a very strong tendency to consider things from the point of view of their development, to emphasize their transformations. A great many contemporary philosophers are thus filled with the spirit of evolution. M. Espinas, for example, whose thesis on animal societies had a great success, made two years ago a study of the origins of the arts, a work unusually rich in facts and ideas, but so condensed as to be difficult reading. He also prepared, while studying the ancient arts, a history of the philosophy of action. To another order of ideas, and with a different spirit, M. Brunetière applied the idea of evolution to literary criticism, and studied from this point of view the nature of criticism itself, the French theatre, and contemporary poetry. The influence of evolution and of Mr. Herbert Spencer is felt even in the works of those who like M. Lalande combat it directly.

In addition to the idealistic and spiritualistic or experimental schools, we have the logical and profound eclecticism of M. Fouillée. His object is to unite the opposing philosophical doctrines of idealism and naturalism—not by taking fragments from each of them, and joining them together, but by discovering the essential principles of the doctrines, and freeing them from accessory ideas which are perhaps only accidental, by purifying them and bringing them to their most exact form. He hopes to be able to form from these principles an organic whole, a thoroughly coherent system, capable of giving satisfaction to the tendencies which each doctrine seeks to satisfy, and at the same time more consistent and true than either idealism or naturalism. At the same time he has applied his doctrine of *idées-forces* to the great questions of philosophy and psychology. The idea for him is in itself a force which tends to its own realization. This is the principle from which he has drawn important applications. Metaphysics, psychology, sociology, ethics, and evolution, have furnished him material for very

numerous works, in which he has developed his theories with a breadth, skill, and clearness which have gained for him numerous admirers. His books on determinism and liberty, and on the psychology of the *idées-forces* are, perhaps, the most celebrated. He has also very ably criticised, from his standpoint, the systems of some of his contemporaries. His discussions with M. Renouvier have greatly interested lovers of dialectic. M. Fouillée carries on a work whose influence will remain, but it is to be regretted that one no longer sees beside him Guyau, who quite independently followed almost the same lines, and who died, while quite young, eleven years ago. His career was short and well fulfilled. He was one of the first who formed the habit of considering problems from the sociological point of view, and his book on the irreligion of the future is at once poetic and rigorous, full of charm and of lofty sentiments, and makes a strong attempt to prepare a better future for the human spirit.

M. Tarde is an equally independent thinker, quite remarkable for his fertility of mind and very lively philosophical imagination. He has applied his philosophical views to sociology especially, and I have already spoken of this side of his work. But he has also set forth his theories in different works, and especially in an important book on universal opposition, in which, after having passed in review the different oppositions which the universe presents, he concludes that opposition, notwithstanding its importance, is not an essential fact, and subordinates it to harmony. He has combatted fatalistic evolutionism, which places above the volitions and ideas of man, a kind of unconscious force which controls them; he insists on universal difference, placing diversity in the heart of things, and also upon universal repetition, the object of the different sciences under different forms. His conceptions are at once ingenious and vigorous, but of course open to criticism like all systems. It is difficult to make them intelligible in a few lines. Taine and Renan have done a great deal for the diffusion of a scientific spirit, which has also been aided by the English philosophy, by that of Stuart Mill for example. Taine, especially, for a long time vigorously opposed the entities and substances of spiritualistic metaphysics. And although a great lover of the concrete, he retained the hope that humanity would arrive at a kind of positive metaphysic. During the second half of this century his influence has been very great and very often excellent. He labored constantly to spread the positive spirit, and the present generation owes him a great deal. But he had his shortcomings and errors, which are perhaps now too much emphasized. One must not become unjust towards him.

M. Ribot is a psychologist rather than a philosopher. I shall speak of him here, however, for he represents an interesting and fairly prominent type of thought. Although a great friend of experience, of exact and clear notions, and of firmly-established facts, he does not renounce metaphysics. But he regards its conclusions rather as works of art, than as established by scientific reasoning, properly so-called. In this respect he approaches the position of Renan; and, like him, he attaches more importance to the philosophic spirit than to the solutions to which it may lead. *La revue philosophique*, which he has edited for twenty-three years with an unusual breadth of view, reflects contemporary thought without bias, but, although it represents every opinion, the positive spirit predominates. It has always given a large place to scientific philosophy and also to the sciences which are most closely allied to philosophy, and to new attempts to open regions yet unexplored. Experimental psychology, hypnotism, and sociology have received a large amount of attention, while no side of the philosophical sciences has been completely neglected.

Finally, I should like to say a few words of that which I myself have done, and of that which I hope to do. If we consider the world as an *ensemble* of individual forces or kinds of monads, they are seen to tend towards an organization which is continually growing greater, to become associated with each other, and sometimes to be formed into new systems—thus there arise systems more or less complex, more or less unified and more or less distinct and separated from the other. . . . The internal law of these systems is that of finality. Real evolution is a progress towards greater finality. I have tried to apply these ideas to psychology, and in this field they have afforded me a theory of the mind and its elements, and a principle of classification for intellects and characters. I have applied them also to ethics, where the problems ought, in my opinion, to be put in a new form, and freed from many of their apparent difficulties by the substitution in a large measure of the conception of finality for that of causality. I believe that these theories are of importance for all the sciences. What consequences flow from them, what signification they give to existence, what end they assign to it, this is what I propose to develop in works as yet scarcely sketched out.

If the present state of French philosophy is compared with that of twenty years ago, what is most noticeable is the disappearance of former schools, the calmer spirit of discussion, the diminution of polemic, and the decrease of general discussions without criticism losing any of its real efficiency. There is a greater independence and more marked in-

dividuality than formerly ; there are no longer compact schools but sympathetic groups. The old problems are to some extent given up, or considered from new points of view which modify somewhat their signification. A great deal of work is carried on in a way which may perhaps appear confused, but which as a whole appears to me to be fruitful. I may remark that some reviews, interesting but established for the purpose of defending special doctrines, have disappeared, while those which represent better the whole philosophical movement continue to flourish, and that a review founded recently, although having a more special aim, is not claimed by any particular school.

It is in my opinion an excellent thing that views which are opposed to each other, as well as those which are allied and merely represent different forms of the same tendency, can be made to work side by side. Philosophers are no longer separated by thick partitions through which no murmur comes, and which shut them up in fixed schools ; to-day they are scarcely separated by more than a hedge above which they are able to be seen and heard, and which one can step over or break through in order to enlarge one's point of view. There will always be enough diversity of opinion among thinkers, and there is no fear that division of labor will be lacking in their groups, but rather that it may be badly carried out.

It is possible indeed, from a purely objective point of view, to consider each of the schools as representing a need of the human mind, and, therefore, a legitimate tendency. And it is not only in virtue of the basis of its doctrine that each school can have thus its own special symbolism, but also in virtue of the way in which this doctrine is understood, accepted, and defended, and by reason of certain secondary ideas which are inseparable from it, as well as by the feelings which sustain it. The general feelings also which inspire its authors and defenders play their part, although they are not always very discernible, nor very plainly in accord with the basis of the doctrine. In order to constitute a satisfactory philosophy, it is not enough to take the ideas of each system, purifying and reconciling them. Or, rather, it is the choice of the ideas which are to be preserved and purified which is the important thing ; and this choice perhaps implies that the eclectic has already a theory of his own. It is necessary also to appreciate the feelings, the more or less hidden needs, which support each doctrine, and to know how to estimate their importance. The chief merit of spiritualism, for example, was its loftiness of sentiment, the desire to elevate above material things the whole range of ideas, affections, and duties. This aim was badly enough expressed

by the theory of the spiritual nature of the soul, the opposition of substances, and the doctrine of free will. The problem here is to find ideas which can satisfy the same sentiments in so far as they are legitimate, and to scrutinize from the scientific point of view the facts upon which the spiritualistic theory is founded, as well as those which appear to oppose it. Idealism has shown, with analogous but more abstract tendencies, a greater want of logic and depth of penetration. Positivism represents an active desire for truth and organization, together with a distrust of theological and metaphysical trickeries; criticism, the desire for rigor of thought, the needs of the moral life, and the demand for differentiation of phenomena; evolutionism, on the contrary, gives expression to the consciousness of the fundamental unity of things, of the universal solidarity of phenomena. And certainly all these tendencies are not peculiar to the doctrine which has, so to speak, incarnated them. There is no philosophy which does not pretend to be logical, but it is the character of the philosopher rather than logical considerations which determines the philosophy. Thus philosophers have often wrongly interpreted the phenomena of the world, or turned aside from their original meaning the assertions of this or that scholar or thinker, who never dreamed of that which his doctrine was going to become, and who saw it at times serve purposes contrary to all his wishes. That has happened to Darwin, for example.

One may, therefore, conceive philosophical investigation as a kind of workshop, where each according to his strength manufactures his piece, invents and combines general ideas which may give a meaning to the world and serve as a direction for life, and only succeeds, in most cases, in putting more or less in relief some of the elements which could constitute a complete philosophy, and regarding the worth of which he deceives himself. Here and there more compact groups are formed: the ability of a worker—his eloquence or reputation—attract others to him, who set themselves to work under his direction, or are simply inspired by his works. When these groups are too much isolated they are separated by large intervening spaces, and have no intercourse except to exchange defiances at a distance. Then some eclectics, becoming acquainted with both points of view and examining their results, propose some reconciliations, which tend to unite and combine them. Some do this in a rude and impolitic manner, while others through zeal for harmony and truth, with more skill than justice. Then the groups break up somewhat, have less internal cohesion and are less separated from the others. Often the books which they have produced, and which notwithstanding their pretensions are nothing more

than fragments, cannot be reconciled with one another. But time passes, and systems are modified, purified and rendered less rigid ; modified, they lend themselves to combinations hitherto unthought of ; dismembered, they sometimes allow certain of their elements to do so. And from time to time new harmonies are seen to spring from the thoughts which animate the workers and which are diffused by passing from one to the other. In this way there arise more or less imperfect syntheses, while the useless refuse disappears. One can only hope for philosophical progress by some similar division of labor. However great a man's genius may be, he cannot know and say everything ; his most general views are always somewhat special and narrow ; he himself does not provide what is necessary to enlarge and complete them. It seems to me that at the present time in France there is sufficient division of labor, and that the work is proving fruitful. Philosophers are separated less by differences in essential points of view and fundamental ideas than by the necessity imposed by the division of labor, and of applying ideas however general to a particular field. Here and there some great systems appear in outline. Perhaps they could be united, the different needs harmonized, and the phenomena given a varied and yet harmonious interpretation. But it is probable that they will be divided more than is necessary, and that their adherents if occasion arises, will emphasize the separation.

IV.

In order to describe the philosophical condition of a country, it is not sufficient to name the philosophers and speak of their works. One must also consider their influence and observe their relation to the public. What carries their ideas down to the crowd which does not read their works, and does not know their names ? How are they understood by it, and how does it use them ? This question is not without importance, but I can here only say a few words on the subject.

The public which thinks, which reads philosophical books, has followed well enough, though perhaps at a little distance, the movement of these last years. It is often interested in the sciences which are yet in their philosophical period, and which are about to pass out of it. In the eighteenth century the public was interested in physics. Quite recently there was a great deal of interest shown in psychology, although at present psychology has given place in a measure to sociology ; and there is still some interest shown in the general ideas which contemporary philosophy affords. These ideas are simplified and distorted in

proportion as they reach less enlightened centers. They are combined or separated in a manner that is often very curious, and although in most of these operations the lack of logic is conspicuous, one sometimes sees unexpected reconciliations made to spring from certain consequences of a doctrine, certain interpretations whose influence may be great. For example, it is this which has happened to the theory of natural selection. The great multitude thus only receives a very enfeebled impression from philosophical speculation. I believe, indeed, that only one of all our numerous daily journals gives regularly, each week or each fortnight, a review of the philosophical movement. The others do not often speak on questions of this nature, and if they diffuse certain doctrines, it is not by expositions or abstract discussions. Scientific or literary journals are more numerous. Even in the leading reviews, general philosophy only finds a small place which is not at all in proportion to its importance, but which apparently corresponds to the taste and demands of the public.

This does not imply that philosophical speculations remain without influence. After having been popularized, transformed, and passed on from one mind to another, they at length become universally diffused under a variety of forms, and play a part in determining the ideas, desires, and volitions of the whole social group. Just at present the preponderating influence of any one doctrine can no longer be discerned among us, but in some of the great intellectual tendencies of the time one can see the influence of recent theories and contemporary discussions. The anticlerical movement of twenty years ago was influenced by positivism, and by the encroachment of the sciences on philosophy. (I only indicate here its philosophical causes.) The reaction which took place some years ago, and which I intend to describe in a book to be entitled *Le nouveau mysticisme*, has produced some very complex results. On the one hand, Catholicism has been strengthened and has gained both in temporal and spiritual influence; on the other hand, a reaction against Catholicism has appeared, and the idealistic tendency of the time has led either to conceptions more or less well founded of a better state of society, or to a somewhat vague religiosity, to moral aspirations without sufficient doctrine. M. Brunetière, who, without professing himself a convert to Catholicism, maintains that this doctrine should be maintained and reestablished, the Socialists, the Anarchists, M. Desjardins, and the society for ethical culture, may illustrate these diverse tendencies. The nationalism of the present day which aims at attaching citizens to their country as to a really concrete whole, or as to a quite superior entity which

represents almost the highest ideal beyond which it is dangerous to look for a principle of action—this nationalism of which one has seen dangerous manifestations in the Dreyfus affair—is allied in certain points to the experimental tendency, to the horror for abstract generalities which inspired some of the philosophical innovators of the century. Taine helped to bring in the nationalistic theory as well as to render it more consistent in appearance, and M. Maurice Barrès was inspired by him. Antisemitism, as has been remarked, may also be derived in part from the conception of races which Taine and Renan have helped to make popular among us at present, but it has doubtless other causes. One is also able to discover the influence of idealism, with its love for lofty abstractions; of spiritualism and of criticism, with their respect for ethics; or again of evolutionism, positivism, and materialism, with their love of truth, respect for facts, and their hope for a superior social order, in the fine enthusiasm which has inspired so many men to make a stand to defend the rights of truth and justice as superior to mere worldly considerations, or even of national interest—if such an opposition could actually exist. The influence of idealist speculations is still evident in French socialism, and the books of Guyau have certainly helped to form the mental attitude of the anarchists. The rather indefinite way in which doctrines are handed down and the different uses which are made of them, give rise to strange mixtures of ideas and sentiments. It is difficult to foretell, when a system has been originated, not only whether its influence will be great, but also what character this influence will have, and in what direction it will affect thought. Often it may have several diverse or even opposed influences. All that is partly dependent upon the nature of the doctrine itself, but, on the other hand, the nature of the different soils which fructify it is also an important factor. And always, as an ultimate fact, will be found the two great needs of mankind—the desire for reality, and the desire for the ideal, which so often appear to be opposed to each other, and which are manifested under such diverse and imperfect forms, and which are doubtless only expressions of the tendency to live and to develop. At present these tendencies have become very active and apparent, and it seems to me French philosophers, who of late have worked, and still work, to purify, strengthen, and satisfy them, have at least merited some esteem for the manner in which they have appreciated and accomplished their task.

FR. PAULHAN.